

Health Literacy, Information Seeking Patterns and Perceived Outcomes among Pregnant Women in Two Districts of Tanzania

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Background

Pregnant women that engage in information seeking process are more likely to have a high level of knowledge about their health, be confident to discuss their health concerns with their health care providers and report better health promotion activities than individuals who do not seek health information. However, health literacy influence pregnant women's information seeking behaviours and consequently their health knowledge and health outcomes. Limited studies have explored the effects of health literacy on the outcomes associated with the information seeking among pregnant women in Tanzania. This study investigates the relationship between health literacy and information seeking patterns and its associated outcomes among pregnant women in Tanzania.

Methods

A cross- sectional survey was conducted among 260 pregnant women aged 18 and above attending selected antenatal clinics (ANC) in Tanzania. Health literacy was assessed using a REALM-SF instrument while information seeking patterns while the associated outcomes were measured using three Likert scales. Descriptive and analytic analyzes were performed using the SPSS, version 24.

Results

Among the demographic factors, level of education was significantly associated with the level of health literacy ($p < 0.001$). The level of health literacy was better among married pregnant women than those who were not married, and among those who have high income more than those with low-income. The number of ANC visits, gestational age and parity were significantly associated with the level of health literacy ($p < 0.05$). A significant relationship was found between health literacy with seeking health information from village leaders ($p < 0.0001$) and all online

information sources ($p < 0.05$). Pregnant women with high level of health literacy strongly agree to confirm (from health professionals) the validity of health information they receive from different sources and to recommend the importance of searching health information to others ($p < 0.001$).

Conclusion

Health literacy has great influence on maternal health behaviors and the associated outcomes. Maternal health interventions targeting both individual women and the public to ensure high health literacy levels across communities are required. An integration of online/ web-based health information in ANC health educational packages would warrant pregnant women access to high quality health information.

Keywords

health literacy, maternal health outcomes, information seeking behavior, T